



**University  
Hospitals Sussex**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Elbow soft tissue injury

Virtual Fracture Clinic

Patient information



Location of elbow soft tissue injury

## What is this information about?

This information is about elbow soft tissue injury.

### It tells you:

- How to look after yourself when you go home from hospital with an elbow soft tissue injury
- What exercises you can do to help heal and strengthen your arm
- What follow-up treatment you might have
- Who to contact if you need further help and support.

## What is an elbow soft tissue injury?

If you have an 'elbow soft tissue injury' this means that you have sprained some of the structures around your elbow. These include ligaments (the tough tissue that connects your bones together), muscles, or the capsule that surrounds the joint.

## How long is it likely to take for my injury to heal?

It usually takes around six weeks for an elbow soft tissue injury to heal.

## What should I do if I am in pain after my elbow soft tissue injury?

If you are in pain, take your usual pain killers or pain killers given to you in the emergency department. Follow the dose instructions on the packet. If you are struggling with pain do speak to your GP or pharmacist.

## When should I be wearing my sling?

Your sling should be worn for comfort only. Try to come out of the sling as soon as possible.

## Will I have a further (follow up) appointment?

No. We do not usually follow up patients with this type of injury as they heal well.

**If after six weeks you are not close to having full movement in your elbow, or have ongoing issues with pain, please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic.**

## Will smoking or vaping slow down my healing?

Yes. Smoking slows healing so if you smoke or vape try to stop or cut down. This is most important in the first two weeks after your injury. If you would like help to stop smoking talk to your GP or visit **Quit smoking – NHS** [www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking) for further information.

## What should I do in the first and second week after my injury?

**In the first and second week after your injury do:**

- Rest your arm for the first 24 to 72 hours (1 to 3 days). However, it is important to keep moving your fingers, wrist, and shoulder, so they do not get stiff. Do this gently, without causing too much pain.
- Apply cold packs (ice pack or frozen peas wrapped in a damp towel) to the sore area for up to 15 minutes, every few hours. This can provide short-term pain relief.

## Be aware

The ice must never be in direct contact with your skin.

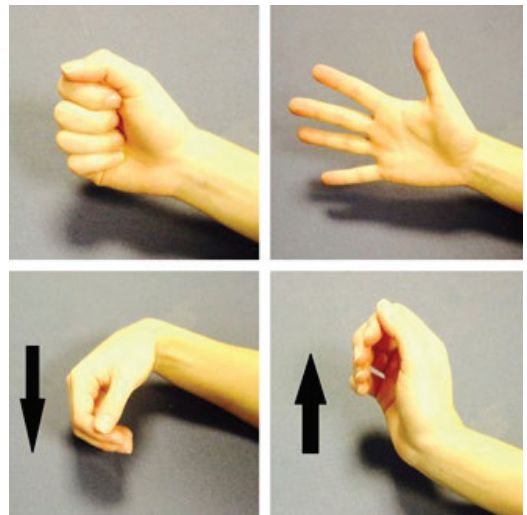
- Stop using your sling as soon as your symptoms allow you to.
- Use your arm so long as it does not cause you too much pain. Avoid doing things if they make your pain worse.
- Avoid repeating movements too many times or putting strain on your elbow by, for example, lifting or pushing heavy things.
- Take your arm out of your sling and practise moving your elbow as soon as you can. It is important to keep moving your elbow.
- Aim to practise the exercises below 5 times a day. They should not cause you too much pain. Do less if they are making your pain worse.

## Finger and wrist bending and straightening

Open and close your hand as shown ten times.

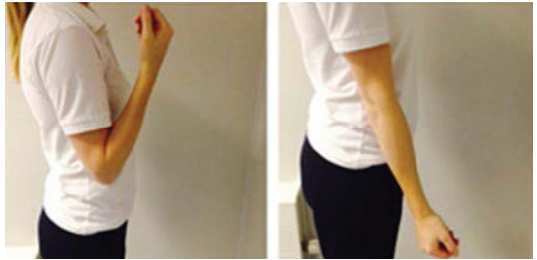
Then move your wrist up and down **10 times**.

After a few days move on to holding a soft ball or a ball of socks. Squeeze the ball as hard as you can without it causing you pain. **Hold for 5 seconds and repeat 10 times.**



## Elbow bend to straighten

Bend and straighten your elbow as far as you can without pain. You should not feel more than a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to help if necessary. **Repeat 10 times** if there is no increase in pain.



## Forearm rotations

Keep your elbow at your side and bent to 90 degrees (a right angle) so your arm is in an L shape by your side.



Slowly turn your palm up and down. You should not feel more than a mild to moderate stretch. You can use your other arm to help if you need to. **Repeat 10 times** if there is no increase in pain.

## What should I be doing from week three after my injury?

- Do not use your sling
- Do your usual light activities with the arm
- Avoid repeating movements too many times or putting strain on your elbow by, for example, lifting or pushing heavy things if your elbow is still sore.
- Gradually increase your activity as your symptoms allow.

## What other things can the Virtual Fracture Clinic help me with?

Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic if you:

- are concerned about your symptoms
- are struggling to return to exercise or your usual activities
- would like further information or support after you have read this information.

## When can I start driving?

You can return to driving when you:

- are no longer using your sling
- can turn the steering wheel as much as you need to without pain
- can safely deal with all emergency situations without being in pain or hesitating. For example, you must be able to stop the car quickly and in full control and safely avoid obstacles
- are covered by your insurance company.

### Be aware

Always try driving in a safe place first.

## How can I get a fit note for work?

You can get a fit note from the Virtual Fracture Clinic team.

## **If I need further advice about my injury, who can I contact?**

**Please contact the Virtual Fracture Clinic on the below details:**

**Royal Sussex County Hospital**  
**01273 696955 Ext. 63428**  
**[uhsussex.fracturecare@nhs.net](mailto:uhsussex.fracturecare@nhs.net)**

**Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm.**

If contacting by phone, please leave a message with your date of birth, name and clear contact details, along with a brief message about what problems you are having.

We will contact you back as soon as possible. We aim to get back to you within 24 hours.

Contacting us by email would be preferable as the phone line can be very busy.

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This leaflet is intended for patients receiving care  
in Brighton and Hove and Haywards Heath.

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